

## BOOK REVIEW

*Religion for Atheists*  
Alain de Botton

Reviewed by John Barnes  
Penguin Books, 2012

This volume is beautifully written, deceptively simple in language and so it is easy to read and yet profound in the amount of scholarly research conducted in many parts of the world on the ten topics covered.

Alain de Botton is a self-declared atheist who had a very devout Jewish upbringing. Many of the examples within pertaining to Christianity employ descriptions of works of art familiar with Roman Catholicism.

De Botton brings to this volume, a deep understanding and appreciation of Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism. The volume comprises 10 chapters as follows:

I	Wisdom without Doctrine;	II	Community;
III	Kindness;	IV	Education;
V	Tenderness;	VI	Pessimism;
VII	Perspective;	VIII	Art;
IX	Architecture;	X	Institutions.

I must admit that when I first saw the book, I thought to myself, should I really be reading this kind of book? but then having read several earlier books by Alain de Botton I knew that I must in order to widen my understanding of the topic covered.

So I purchased it and began reading it immediately and I can say frankly that you too should read, absorb and hopefully apply some of the teachings within.

One topic is particularly important to our faculty and students and that is chapter IV Education. As Reverend Brother Dr. Bancha Saenghiran fsg., and Dr. Kittiphotikitti keep reminding us we must make study and learning relevant in the fast-changing world. We are dealing with young energetic and restless minds, often distracted by electronic media and encouraged to seek instant gratification.

I believe that within this book, we can find much wisdom and guidance, in how to make learning both interesting and fun. We can see how lessons from the past can help us guide our students to a better future, through a broader understanding of peoples from other cultures and religions. The many advantages of the world's religions as applied to these numerous fields of study and aspects of our lives are clearly explained. I have already read excerpts to students in my ethics class which resulted in lively discussion by all.

This is a beautiful book, with many black and white pictures of religious works of art exemplifying the text. Colour plates would have made it even more beautiful.